

Catawba County Emergency Medical Services Standard Operating Guidelines

Personal Protective Equipment

Purpose

To issue a policy to all Catawba County EMS employees and volunteers that will help prevent on the job exposure and the correct use of PPE. This policy was developed to comply with OSHA standards 29 CFR 1910.132 for Personal Protective Equipment. The standard requires the employer to perform and certify a hazard assessment for personal protective equipment (PPE), especially for the head, hands, feet, face, and eyes. OSHA requires the employer to pay for personal protective equipment and its upkeep (maintenance and/or cleaning) and replacement.

Requirements

OSHA specifies the need for appropriate personal protective equipment for healthcare workers under three separate standards and guidelines; the Blood borne Pathogen Standard, the Hazardous Communications Standard, and the CDC's Guidelines for Preventing the Transmission of Mycobacterium tuberculosis in Healthcare Facilities.

This policy will apply to all the above mentioned.

Responsibilities

The Safety Coordinator is responsible for the hazard assessment and its certification, for making any necessary revisions, for ensuring the availability of appropriate personal protective equipment, and for necessary employee training. Hazard assessment documentation will be maintained in the Safety Manual and shall be reviewed annually to ensure that it is accurate and current.

Catawba County Emergency Medical Services will provide, at no cost to the employee, the required personal protective equipment. Volunteer organizations under the EMS Systems will be responsible for supplying its member's appropriate personal protective equipment. Selection of personal protective equipment will be based on the findings of the assessment, with accommodations for individual needs (i.e. latex allergy). Additional information will be included in the pertinent sections of the written program.

The Safety Coordinator is also responsible for ensuring proper training in the use of personal protective equipment. This will be included in initial and annual employee training. This includes full time, reserve staff and volunteer agencies.

Personal protective equipment is designed to protect the healthcare provider's skin and uniform from contamination with chemicals or infectious materials. PPE will be cleaned or replaced by Catawba County EMS if damaged while personnel are on duty. Volunteer organizations will be responsible for cleaning and replacing its members PPE.

General Guidelines

All EMS staff and volunteers should routinely use appropriate barrier precautions to prevent skin and mucous membrane exposure when contact with blood or other body fluids of any patient is anticipated.

Gloves should be worn for touching blood and body fluids, mucous membranes, or non-intact skin of all patients, for handling items or surfaces soiled with blood or body fluids, and for performing venipuncture and other vascular access procedures. Gloves should be changed after contact with each patient. Gloves of various sizes are provided and readily available.

Masks and protective eyewear or face shields should be worn during procedures that are likely to generate droplets of blood or other body fluids to prevent exposure of mucous membranes of the mouth, nose, and eyes.

Respiratory protection (N95 Masks) is required for employees who enter areas occupied by a confirmed or suspected TB patient or who perform high-risk procedures on such patients. N95 masks are provided to each individual. Fit testing is done on an annual basis.

Safety glasses are issued to each employee upon employment. Safety glasses shall be worn as protection during any situation that might pose a safety hazard to the face or eyes.

Some examples of situations when the safety glasses should be utilized include:

- Intubations
- Suctioning
- Establishing intravenous lines
- Assisting with childbirth
- During care of a patient where extrication is being performed around you
- Any time splatter of blood or body fluids is suspected

Gowns or aprons should be worn during procedures that are likely to generate splashes of blood or other body fluids.

OSHA required foot protection only in situations where there is danger of foot injuries due to falling or rolling objects, or object piercing the sole, and where the employee's feet are exposed to electrical hazards. However, in the clinical/field area, there is always the potential for spills of chemicals or biohazardous materials to the feet. Therefore, only black leather boots with fiberglass or steel shank toes are allowed.

Provided personal protective equipment (turnout gear) will be worn on all motor vehicle accidents and hazardous materials incidents where employees and volunteers are involved in extrication activities or may come into contact with broken glass or metal.

Helmets are provided on each ambulance for head protection. Helmets should be utilized in the same situations as mentioned with turnout gear.

High-visibility traffic safety vests are provided on each ambulance. Three high-visibility safety vests are issued to each crew. The vests must be worn when individuals are working on, or near, a roadway. The vests are designed to warn motorists that you are on or near the roadway, thus they must be worn as the outermost garment. The vests will be worn over your regular uniform shirt, jacket, coat, or turn-out gear. Other forms of reflectivity are not to be substituted for the vests.

The extra vests assigned to each crew are for trainees, riders, observers, or students that accompany you while on calls.

SCBA will be supplied to the Catawba County EMS SMAT team. Members will be fit tested initially and when changes are needed thereafter.

All PPE will be cleaned, maintained, and/or replaced by Catawba County Emergency Medical Services as needed. Volunteer organizations are responsible for cleaning, maintaining, and/or replacing their members PPE.

4/7/06 – BDB